WE FEEL ANXIOUS AND NERVOUS: THE UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH STUDENTS' EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES IN LEARNING TO SPEAK ENGLISH

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore the undergraduate English students' emotional experience in terms of anxious and nervous feelings and identify its factors in learning to speak English. Research design of this research was qualitative narrative approach, in which the researchers attempts to elicit the students' emotional experience in learning speaking at the private Islamic university in Banjarmasin. In collecting the data, the researchers use semi-structured interview techniques and are analyzed using thematic inductive approach. From the findings revealed that there were three undergraduate students who experienced dominant negative emotions such as anxiety, nervous and shy during learning to speak English. While another student considered that negative emotions did not influence him too much to speak English. There were two main factors that contributing anxiety and nervousness; external factors (such as lack of confidence and the environment) and internal factors such as lacking mastery of grammar and vocabulary). By understanding students' emotional experiences, the teacher could motivate their students to be active and provide various teaching strategies so that the students feel happy and enjoyable to speak English.

Keywords: emotional experiences; learning to speak english; undergraduate students.

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman emosional mahasiswa bahasa Inggris dalam hal perasaan cemas dan gugup dan mengidentifikasi faktor-faktornya yang mempengaruhi mereka dalam belajar berbicara bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menggunakan naratif kualitatif di mana peneliti mengeksplorasi pengalaman emosional para mahasiswa dalam belajar berbicara bahasa Inggris di universitas islam swasta di Banjarmasin. Dalam pengumpulan data, peneliti menggunakan teknik wawancara semi terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan induktif tematik. Hasil riset menemukan bahwa ada tiga mahasiswa yang mengalami emosi negatif secara dominan seperti cemas, gugup dan malu selama belajar berbicara bahasa Inggris, sedangkan mahasiswa lainnya menganggap bahwa emosi negatif tidak terlalu mempengaruhi dirinya untuk berbicara bahasa Inggris. Ada dua faktor kecemasan dan kegugupan yaitu faktor eksternal (seperti kurang percaya diri dan lingkungan) dan faktor internal (seperti kurang menguasai tata bahasa dan kosa kata). Dengan memahami pengalaman emosional mahasiswa, dosen dapat memotivasi mahasiswa untuk aktif dan memberikan berbagai strategi pengajaran yang menarik sehingga mahasiswa merasa senang belajar berbicara bahasa Inggris.

Kata Kunci: pengalaman emosional; belajar berbicara bahasa Inggris; mahasiswa S1.

PENDAHULUAN

Emotions plays an important role in the learning classroom because it influences how someone's speaking. It affects the students' ability to process information and to understand exactly what they achieve. Emotions can stimulate the thinking of the learners and also interfere with speaking. Imai (2010) conveyed that the progress of learners was affected by negative or positive emotions. In other words, learning can be encouraged or discouraged by the emotional response. For example, when learner feel positive emotions like secure, happy and excited about the material, students learn and perform more successfully. In the meantime, negative emotions like anger, anxiety and nervous can distract students. Feeling tension, concern and nervousness will affect the ability of students to perform in a language learning. Unfortunately, the emotions of students are more discouraging rather than encouraging in the case of foreign language learning. Anxiety is one of the emotional could make this learning process difficult. In language learning, emotional situations such as anxiety can distract students. The American Psychological Association (2015) also defines anxiety as a tension, worried thinking and changing physicality emotion. Wooten (2008) also views anxiety as an atmosphere of negative fear accompanied by physiological characteristics. It can be concluded that anxiety in learning to speak English can hinder undergraduate students.

In the relation to the English learning, speaking English demands foreign English learners have a lot of courage and confidence to deliver a message to their listeners. English in Indonesia is a foreign language that every high school student or university student should master. However, it is not easy to learn English for foreign language learners. It is very difficult to speak in foreign languages and it takes a long time to develop skills. Foreign English Learner experiences several kinds of learning in the target language. The students are experienced during these processes with internal and external factors that influence positive and negative effects on the English learning process. Emotions can be described as positive or negative, emotions could damage or benefit learning processes (Pekrun et al., 2002; Imai, 2010).

Therefore, the lack of belief in anxiety about mistakes could be many reasons to be taken into consideration. It can be stressful if learners speak in a second language or in a foreign language until learners become fluent. Tornburry (2005) states that the lack of vocabulary, improper grammar and the fear of error are some of the factors which can encourage speak inability and cause a strong feeling of anxiety. In addition, not only the beginner, but also the university students, who usually handle English, have a problem of language anxiety. However, there is a limited number of studies on students' emotional experience, and most of previous studies only focuses on speaking anxiety. Previous research

has focused on EFL students speaking performances, anxiety, and motivation (Chen & Hwang, 2020; Collie, Ginns, Martin, & Papworth, 2017)). This is an important to investigate the research about students' anxiety and nervousness of learning speaking skills in the context of the higher education where these feelings influence the students' confidence and performance to speak English well. Thus, in order to reduce the students' negative feelings experienced by the students such as anxiety and nervousness, the lecturer should provide interesting strategies of teaching speaking skills, understands their students psychologically and approach in person how they feel comfortable in learning this skill. This present study can contribute to both teachers or lecturers and students who teach speaking skills to the students at the class, so the students fell confidence in performing their speaking at the class.

METODE PENELITIAN

Narrative inquiry design was adopted in this study to give an insight how peoples' lived experiences are meaningful in their life (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It meant that this design provided an understanding to the researchers in humans' lived experiences and told stories (Dewey, 1938) with reconstructing on past stories and impacting on the present and future events. Kenyon argued that the essence of this study involved participants who experienced true stories in the past and helps the researcher and the researched understand how their experiences are meaningful and impactful of their worlds (2017).

There are four participants recruited voluntarily in this study, two males and two females of undergraduate English students who were learning an English speaking at the study program of English language education at a private Islamic university in Banjarmasin City, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. All participants sat at the eight semester and had the middle and upper level of the English speaking proficiency showed in the English test. Two of the participating students resided outside the city in one of the districts of the South Kalimantan province and the rest lived in Banjarmasin City.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants

Participants	Gender	University	Semester	Department	Age
Dinda	Female	Private Islamic University in Banjarmasin	8th	English Language Education	22
Dedi	Male	Private Islamic University in Banjarmasin	8th	English Language Education	23
Diana	Female	Private Islamic University in Banjarmasin	8th	English Language Education	22
Doni	Male	Private Islamic University in Banjarmasin	8th	English Language Education	22

In collecting the narrative data, the researchers employed semi-structured interviews to provoke the students emotional experiences in learning to speak English. The interview was intended to elicit some questions to address to the research questions in this present study. According to Kvale (1996: 174) in terms of interpreting the meanings of the "identified phenomena," an interview was a conversation whose object was to gather details of the (life-world) of the interviewee. In the interview process, the researchers first contacted the participants through the phone call in the Whatsapp application to ask their willingness to be interviewed. After the participants agreed to take a part in this study, then the researcher negotiated the meeting time and venue to the participants in the interview. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and residence between the researcher and the participants were far away, we decided using the Zoom meeting application to facilitate the interview process.

To communicate smoothly, the researchers allowed the participants to choose the language either an Indonesian or a Banjarese language in the interview. The participants were interviewed separately at different time and different place, so that the researcher could explore how their anxious and nervous feelings in speaking English at the class. The researchers recorded all the interview process through the recording feature in the Zoom meeting application with asking the participants' permission. The thematic inductive analysis was adopted in this research. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis was a approach for identifying, analyzing, and reporting thematic patterns of data. They also added that this approach was able to describe rich data in detail and interpret various aspects of the research topic. Before analyzing the data, the researcher transcribed and translated the language of the interview into English about the results of the interviews with the participants. Widodo (2014) emphasized that transcribed interview data could be a good way to represent, analyze and interpret the information that have been submitted.

Through identifying patterns that emerge repeatedly in data, the researcher went through the process of coding certain words / phrases / sentences that form certain categories or topics. A code was a researcher-generated construct in qualitative data analysis that symbolizes and thus assigned interpreted meaning to each individual data for later pattern detection, categorization, theory building, and other analytical processes (Saldaña, 2015). In providing this code, the process of identifying refered to the relevant themes in the interview data. Lastly, the researcher sent the transcript of the interview results to the participants to validate the study data, the researchers conducted a member checking (participants' responses to the research data).

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Students' Emotional Experiences in Learning to Speak English

Speaking English was not an easy to speak fluently in the context of foreign language learners. It was because students are demanded to understand and produce well regarding content, fluency, grammar, lexical items and expression of speaking at the class, so when student were asked to speak English individually or in group looked nervous and anxious to speak English loudly. The negative emotions in learning to speak English were often experienced by most of students who began learning to speak English (Dewaele, 2005). For example, the university students in this present study gained difficulty to produce appropriate and fluent English words, so it evoked negative feelings which implicate their speaking performances. The indication of negative emotions emerged clearly in their English presentation, debate, speech activities and many more. They felt nervous and anxious when the teacher asked them to present their topic or ideas in the front of their classmates and the teacher. They narrated their emotional stories in the interview results, they expressed that:

Personally, there are more negative emotions in my experience because I'm quite intovert. It looks like a lot of negative emotions come out when speaking, especially in front of the class. Once in a debate class, if I'm not mistaken in the fourth or fifth meeting, the lecturer asked us to make our own arguments which were written down and then we explained. When I was standing in front of the class, I was immediately anxious, nervous, stiff and couldn't say anything (blank) in front of the class. (Dinda, May 2021).

Similarly, negative emotions also happened in other participants, Diana and Doni, who felt insecure, nervous when they spoke English at the front of their classmates and the teacher. These negative emotions emerged when they were presenting a topic in front of their classmates; all their classmates paid more attention to them to listen carefully their English presentation and made notes to ask some questions to them. As stated by Mouhoubi-Messadh (2017) students felt more worried and confused when their friends asked about the material they conveyed; they did not know how to answer the questions and looked unprepared. As reported by them that their negative emotions emerged since speaking or presenting at the front of their classmates. They revealed in the interview result that:

I have emotional experiences when I spoke English at the class. It was indicated when my teacher asked me to come forward in front of the class to tell a English story or speech, so it made me scared, insecure and nervous. At the time I had no idea how to speak it. (Diana, May 2021)

Once when I gave a presentation, we usually explained our material first, then there were questions and answers. Then, during the question and answer session, my friends asked a

question, in my brain the words must have been strung together, but I found it difficult or afraid to pronounce them. It was like shaking, my heart was pounding, so it was hard to say the words. (Doni, May 2021)

On the other hand, one participant believed that speaking at the front of their friends and the teachers did not matter because for him, learning to speak was a learning process to perform his English speaking. Thus, he responded to it positively. This perception influenced his emotion that led to be positive. He said that if the students understood and prepared well the topic or material to be discussed, he was sure that they were able to produce English words to be better and confident. As told by him, Dedi, narrated his story in the interview:

In my opinion, negative emotions (such as anxiety, nervousness, insecurity) would not arised if you prepared yourself before speaking. I didn't feel too anxious when I came forward in front of the class because I already understood the material I was going to talk about. I admited that sometimes I also felt nervous, especially if the audience was large, but it was not really affect my learning to speak English. (Dedi, May 2021)

Factors Contributing to the Students' Anxiety and Nervousness

During the process of learning to speak English, the negative emotions were driven by the internal and external factors that much contributed to the students' speaking performances. The experience of negative emotions such as anxiety and nervousness often arised during learning to speak English experienced by undergraduate English students (Thornbury, 2005), . The negatively emotional experiences revealed that external factors were from lack of students' self-confidence and environments which were not support to expose their speaking skills and internal inputs came from low or poor level of the mastery of grammar and poor vocabulary.

In the external factor, majority of the participant experienced negative emotions were related to the lack of their confidence. It was because the presence of their classmates and more attention from the teacher and their classmates in their speaking performance that made them nervous and anxious to speak confidently (Sadeghi et al., 2013), . At the time, they had no idea how to deliver ideas accurately and fluently because most of their friends looked closely and watched them carefully, so it exerted influenced their fluent English performances. Moreover, they assumed that being center of all classmates' attention created negative feelings such as anxiety and nervousness and believed that their friends underestimated their speaking abilities. As reported by one of undegraduate English students, Dinda, in the interview that:

In my opinion, my classmates were the most influential because my friends filled the classroom. Therefore, I became the center of attention when I stood in front of the class. Whatever I said was what they listened to, so if the sentences I said did not match or complicated, I should be worried. Sometimes, there were classmates who underestimated me which made me more nervous and less confident. (Dinda, May 2021).

Another participant, Doni, also had negative feeling in which he compared his own abilities with each other. He told in the interview result that:

My classmates contributed to my negative emotions. I felt anxious as well as nervous because I compared my English speaking ability with my classmates. I felt my friends are better than me at speaking English, but why I was not confidence if I compared with them. Sometimes I felt shame with them and tried to do the best for the next time. (Doni, May 2021)

In addition, the existence of lecturers in learning to speak English was also a contributing factor in the lack of confident causing feelings of anxiety and nervousness. This was experienced by one of the English students while participating in learning to speak English. He felt pressured because he wanted to look perfect and got good grades from the lecturers while studying. Therefore, he considered that lecturers were also a factor in the emergence of feelings of anxiety and nervousness:

I assumed that the lecturer was a factor to my anxiety and nervousness because we studied with the lecturer and the lecturer had to assign us a value or a score. We were expected to be perfect, yet when we spoke, we experienced nervousness, anxiety, a lack of confidence, a limited vocabulary, and grammatical errors. We were pressured because we wanted to get good grades and have to be perfect. I became more nervous when I spoke English, especially when I saw the lecturer. (Doni, May 2021)

Another external factor was related to the environment in which the participants in this present study encountered the problem in speaking English. Hanifa (2018) stated that it was very important to support or encourage the students to speak English very well. If there was available English speaking zone at the campus and a living environment enabled them to explore their speaking English to be better. They could learn how to produce English words or communicate with their friends and the teachers out of the speaking classes. Moreover, they could discuss and share everything in English so that their English speaking improved bit by bit every day. It meant that the students could get used to communicate using English with their closest people so as to mitigate or reduce negative feelings or emotions (Raja, 2017) . However, it did not happen in some students in this study, so it implicated their feelings such as depression and not confidence, confusion, nervousness and anxiety to speak English. Even students felt pressured when everyone expected them much more to speak English like to be as a

native speaker. The participants stated in their interview that the learning environment such a campus and living environment played an important role in encouraging them to practice more:

I once joined the Australian Village (a program from the University) if I did not mistaken it was the second semester and it held for a week. The program had to use English for a week. I realized that I was not confident in speaking English because I had a weakness in the vocabulary like ask to myself my pronunciation was appropriate or not. Moreover, I felt anxious, for example when I spoke English, the person I was communicating with understood what I meant or not, I was afraid that it would not connected, they would be confused about what to answer. I was also anxious that they would get bored listening to me spoke English which was still not fluent. (Dedi, May 2021)

The environment where I lived also plays an important role because in my living environment there were only two people with English education backgrounds, but were not committed to practicing speaking English so I could not practice speaking English at home. Besides that, I felt pressured because the neighbors thought that I was an English faculty student which meant I could spoke English well. Meanwhile, I preferred reading to speaking because I felt nervous when speaking English. (Dinda, May 2021)

The last factor came from the internal side which was related to the lack of gramatical and lexical competences. During learning to speak English, definitely, it would not be separated from the mastery of grammatical and vocabulary that would influenced how well they speak English (Sadeghi et. al., 2013). These participants stated that another factors influenced their negative emotions were the lack of grammar and mastery of lexical items:

Grammar and vocabulary were very clear that the answer would be the main factors on me. Now, when I was speaking in front of class, the first thing I thought about was the vocabulary, then the grammatical, but if I forgot the vocabulary, how could I spoke right? That was what made me nervous, afraid, embarrassed, not confident. How could I did not get anxiety, we wanted to speak, for example the word "makan" then, I forgot the vocab "makan" in English, it was clearly made me nervous. In addition, English has grammatical, there were tenses which was divided according to the adverb of time. In Indonesian, there is no difference in verbs, for example the verb "eat" is still the same, it is different if in English the word "eat" became eat, eating, eaten. It's clear that the word "eat" changed. That was the reason I worried of the way I spoke the wrong thing that would embarrassed me. (Diana, May 2021)

Once when I was giving a presentation suddenly someone asked me about the material I was presenting, which made me forgot what vocabulary I wanted to say, so I felt nervous. After did presentation, I also often thought, when I spoke, was the grammar correct? Did they understand what I was talking about? If the sentence structure was wrong, it made me felt embarrassed, especially since I was an English student but when I spoke it was still not good enough. (Doni, May 2021)

KESIMPULAN

Based on the findings and discussion in the previous chapter, the researcher concluded that there were three undergraduate students who experienced dominant negative emotions during learning to speak English, while another student considered that negative emotions did not dominate too much. There were two main factors that cause anxiety and nervousness, namely external factors (such as lack of confidence and the environment) and internal factors (such as lack of mastery of grammar and vocabulary). The first external factor was lack of self-confidence caused by feeling ashamed to be the center of attention; considering classmates underestimate the students' English speaking ability; comparing one's own abilities with classmates; and wanting to seem perfect and got good grades from the lecturer and another external factor was environment. However, the internal factor experienced by this English undergraduate student was the lack of mastery of grammar and vocabulary. These factors made these students felt anxious and nervous in learning to speak English.

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